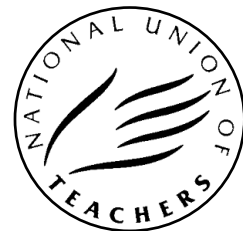




Cambridgeshire Association

NEWSLETTER

Apr.
2008



www.cambsnut.org.uk

STRIKE BULLETIN #1

Following the successful outcome of the ballot, the NUT National Executive was unanimous in calling a national, one-day strike on teachers' pay. The strike will take place on **Thursday, 24th April**. NUT members voted by a majority of three to one to support the action.

NUT members were balloted for national strike action over the Government's proposals to impose further below-inflation pay increases on teachers. The NUT does not call for strike action lightly. This will be the first national strike over pay undertaken by NUT members for 21 years. It has been organised in full accordance with the requirements of the law. It follows a lengthy campaign during which the NUT has repeatedly drawn attention to the frustration of teachers about the effects of below-inflation pay increases.

The Union will be writing to all members with more detailed information about the NUT's strike and the activities which you and your colleagues can undertake both on the day itself, and before and afterwards, to take forward the Union's campaign. In the meantime, there is advice and information on the Union's website (www.teachers.org.uk) on commonly-asked questions about strike action, which many members will be taking for the first time.

We will also be writing to you with details of activities we are organising throughout Cambridgeshire, and you can also keep up-to-date with the latest news on our Association website: www.cambsnut.org.uk.

We are planning:

- ♦ to co-ordinate our activities with the **PCS** and **UCU**, other public sector unions who are taking pay action on the same day.
- ♦ to organise leafleting of parents throughout the county; we will be sending out multiple copies of leaflets aimed at parents into schools for members to distribute; it is important that parents understand why we are taking this action.
- ♦ to organise, **on the day itself**, a series of activities in Cambridge culminating in a major **rally:**
12 noon - 1pm in the Guildhall, Market Square, Cambridge

We are aiming to have hundreds of striking teachers at that rally - why not make a banner from your school and bring it along.

We have called a special Committee Meeting to finalise our plans for the strike day. This meeting is open to all members - please come along with your suggestions and any questions you may have:

Wednesday April 9th - 5 to 6 pm - Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge

The NUT believes that teaching is the best and most important of all the professions. I am confident that your view is the same.. Taking strike action, therefore, will never be an easy choice for teachers. Action now, however, will help prevent increasing damage through teacher shortages and low morale. I am asking all members to show the strength of our concern for future of our profession and of education in this country. I urge you to take part in making our strike action on 24th April a success.

Steve Sinnott (General Secretary, National Union of Teachers)

YOUNG TEACHERS' CONFERENCE 2008

Friday 6th to Sunday 8th June 2008 at Stoke Rochford Hall, Grantham

Work to Live not Live to Work

The Young Teachers' Conference is the most important annual national event organised specifically for young teachers. Previous Young Teachers' Conferences, held in 2006 and 2007, have been popular, well-attended events. The Young Teachers' Conference provides young teachers with the opportunity to meet and network with others from across England and Wales. The conference is open to all in-service NUT members aged 35 or under.

Conference Programme:

This year's conference is focusing on work/life balance. The theme of this year's Young Teachers' Conference will be "**Work to Live, Not Live to Work – Getting the Right Balance**".

Confirmed speakers will include:

- * Sue Palmer - education consultant and author of 'Toxic Childhood'
- * John Illingworth - Past President and Member of NUT's Mental Health Working Party

The Conference will also include subject based workshops and campaign based task groups.

Cambridgeshire Association would like to send a delegation of two or three young teachers to this Conference, all expenses paid. It is a great opportunity to become more involved in the work of the NUT at a time when the Union is really standing up for teachers. If you are 35 or under, please consider putting yourself forward for this opportunity. Contact the Secretary, Jon Duveen, if you are interested or would like more information (07773778062; jon.duveen@btinternet.com).

NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2008

Saturday 5th to Sunday 6th July 2008 at Stoke Rochford Hall, Grantham

A Good Local School for Every Child

Attending the NUT National Education Conference is one of the best ways of keeping up to date with the latest educational developments. It takes place in the relaxed atmosphere of the Union's training centre, Stoke Rochford Hall in Lincolnshire. This Conference is open to all NUT members.

Conference Programme:

The theme of this year's conference is "A Good Local School for Every Child and Every Community" and keynote invited speakers include:

- * Martin Narey, Chief Executive of Barnardo's
- * Professors Maurice Galton and John MacBeath on 'Teachers under Pressure'
- * Phil Beadle, teacher and trainer on white working class boys' achievement
- * Michael Davidson on OECD's PISA report
- * Head teachers Anne Swift, Sir Alasdair Macdonald and Alison Banks

There will be many opportunities to interact with colleagues and workshop sessions on topics of interest to all. Contact the Secretary, Jon Duveen, if you are interested in attending this Conference, all expenses paid, or would like more information (07773778062; jon.duveen@btinternet.com).

Love Music Hate Racism CARNIVAL

FREE - 12 noon 'til 6pm - 27th April - Victoria Park, London E3

Initial confirmed acts include:

Babyshambles, RAR Allstars ft. very special guests, Jerry Dammers, Nihal, Roll Deep, Patrick Wolf

Report of the 2008 NUT Conference

The annual NUT Conference can be quite a combative affair, with delegates engaging in robust debate and motions being won or lost by pretty small margins. This year, there was a genuine sense of unity in the conference hall and just about every single vote was unanimous or carried with a very large majority. This is partly as a result of the fact that this year we all have a common enemy in a government that is trying to impose below inflation pay rises. But it is also a result of a genuine desire to act together in order to act more effectively.

There were several key themes in this Conference, and as delegates listened to the debates it became clearer how these different themes are all inter-related and underpinned by the government's current ideological approach.

Pay

At the time of the Conference, the NUT was still awaiting the outcome of its ballot for a national strike for all schoolteachers on 24th April, the first national teachers' strike for 22 years. UCU were balloting members in FE Colleges for action on that day, and other public sector unions were also thinking of joining in. There was a real sense of common purpose in the Conference hall and a strong feeling that the action on the 24th April would be the start of an ongoing pay campaign. The NUT agreed to ballot its members for discontinuous strike action, giving the National Executive real flexibility in pursuing the campaign. There is a real sense of anger amongst teachers about the government's attempts to control

public spending by cutting the pay of public sector workers, while people in the private sector are seeing their pay rise by more than inflation and while billions of pounds of public money are being used to fight an unjust war in Iraq and to shore up a failing bank. At the same time as having our pay cut, we are being asked to work harder...

Workload

It is impossible to achieve a reasonable work-life balance if you are a full-time teacher. The main driver of unacceptable teacher workload is the top-down target driven agenda set by the government via School Improvement Partners and OFSTED. This includes league tables, SATs, prescriptive target-setting, OFSTED and self-evaluation, performance management etc. When unacceptable workload is combined with pay cuts, is it any wonder that one in three newly qualified teachers leave the profession after one year? The Conference agreed that, following the pay strike on the 24th April, we would link our campaigns on pay and workload when planning future action. Of course, one of the main factors in increasing teacher workload is over-sized classes ...

Class size

The reason class-sizes are so large in our schools is very simple – the government is not putting enough money into education. The UK comes only 23rd out of 30 developed countries in the 2007 OECD survey of average class size and the gap between average class size in state primary schools (25.8) and independent primary schools (10.7) is higher in the UK than anywhere else in

the developed world. The body of research that shows that smaller classes lead to better education is enormous. The Conference called on the government to implement a phased legally binding maximum class size of 20 by 2020 in both primary and secondary schools, and a moratorium on school closures. As well as affecting attainment, large classes have a major effect on how students behave in the classroom ...

Classroom behaviour

This year's Conference motion on classroom behaviour made it clear that there is absolutely no contradiction between defending members against harassment, abuse and assault on the one hand, and promoting a student centred approach to classroom management on the other. The NUT is very effective in its robust defence of teachers faced with extreme forms of bad behaviour in the classroom but, unlike other teacher associations, is trying to debate the root causes of problem behaviour rather than retreating into an increasingly authoritarian position. The Conference motion set up a national NUT classroom behaviour working group whose role will be to produce and disseminate literature aimed at teachers, parents, policy-makers etc. outlining the root causes of problem classroom behaviour and setting out strategies to create a classroom ethos that is fully inclusive and at the same time conducive to effective teaching and learning. As well as over-sized classes, factors that effect behaviour in the classroom include institutional racism, inadequate resources, the ethos of league tables and testing, an inflexible top-down curriculum,

insufficient learning support, inadequate or over-authoritarian on-site provision for dealing with classroom incidents and an ethos in which education is done 'to' students rather than 'with' them. The motion also referred to perhaps the most significant factor in determining how well students do at school: social class ...

Poverty

In his address to the Conference, newly installed national President Bill Greenshields spoke at length about the links between social class, poverty and education. In 1931, R.H. Tawney wrote "*The hereditary curse upon English education is its organisation along lines of social class ... the barbarous association of differences of educational opportunities with distinctions of wealth and social position*". Since then, a wide range of educational researchers have reached the same incontrovertible position; that there is a direct, sustained and devastating correlation between educational attainment and social class. The government recognises this link; as David Milliband, then Schools Minister, said in 2004 "...when it comes to the link between educational achievement and social class, Britain is at the bottom of the league for

industrialised countries". In Britain today, the richest 10% of the population own 71% of the wealth. Instead of setting the elimination of poverty as an absolute priority, governments have continued to blame teachers and the education system for continuing inequalities in educational attainment. Of course, as teachers, we must continue to do everything to raise all students' aspirations, motivation and achievement, but we have to refute the notion that schools can in themselves put the matter right. The problem has its roots in our wider society, in a system that relies on the existence of 'have-nots' in order that the 'haves' can have a lot more of their share.

Other motions

The Conference also passed excellent motions drawing attention to the financial difficulties faced by young teachers and pledging robust support for Local Associations and School Representatives, who sometimes put themselves on the line in order to represent their members. There was a motion deploring the way that supply/agency teachers are exploited and another pledging support for overseas trained teachers, many of whom face serious discrimination.

Delegates again agreed to campaign for the end of SATs and for the abolition of OFSTED and the creation of a much fairer system of inspection. A motion on early years education also included a call for a reduction in assessment. The Union reaffirmed its strong opposition to academies and the way that the new specialist diplomas are being developed. There was a powerful motion on gender equality, including a commitment to defend abortion rights. A motion that was widely reported in the press will make it easier for teachers and students to oppose military recruitment in schools, and there was an excellent motion on inclusive education. More details of specific motions will appear in The Teacher magazine.

Finally ... as in previous years, the Cambridgeshire delegation had a strong influence at the Conference. Speakers from Cambridgeshire proposed the motions on workload and on classroom behaviour, and spoke in debates on early years education and specialist diplomas. This was a great Conference, showing the NUT at its best – utterly united in fighting for a fairer education system within a fairer society.

GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 14th May 2008 from 5.00 pm to 6.30 pm

at Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge

Agenda to follow - PUT THIS DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW!

**The 2007/08 ANNUAL REPORT of the Cambridgeshire Association
can now be read on our website: www.cambsnut.org.uk**

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